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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION ON KING ABDULLAH'S
VISIT TO THE US

Summary

-- King Abdullah's visit, activities and remarks during his visit to the United States received prominent coverage in the local print media published over the weekend, September 23-25. Front pages of all papers carried lead reports that highlighted the King's various meetings and remarks, particularly his meeting with President Bush. All papers published today, September 25, focus on the announcement of the King's planned visit to the Palestinian territories and Israel to hold talks with the Palestinian and Israeli leaders in efforts to "continue the peace process". Under the general theme of "a successful visit by an Arab Hashemite leader", few commentaries hail the King's "voice of moderation" and underscore his achievements in terms of correcting the ill-portrayed image of Islam in the world, the importance of continuing peace-making efforts towards resolving the Palestinian issue, and the significance of doing everything possible to bring stability and peace to Iraq and hence the entire region.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The Jordanian-American summit meeting"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (09/23) editorializes: "The meeting between King Abdullah II and U.S. President George Bush represents the climax of the extensive effort that the King has been exerting during his recent visit to the United States.. The King sought to correct the image of Islam and to put an end to the distortion from which the Muslim nation is suffering due to the despicable behavior adopted by the terrorists in the name of Islam.. Listening to impressions voiced by the people who met with the King, we can understand the success that he achieved on the ground and the in-depth change he effected on the viewpoint that prevailed post 9/11. It was a success to the point that many of the Americans who listened to the King's words about the values and principles of Islam now believe that it is necessary to overcome the past and to move forward towards a new era of dialogue and understanding between cultures, civilizations and people."

-- "A working agenda packed with activities and fruitful meetings"

Semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (09/23) editorializes: "King Abdullah's meeting with each of the U.S. Vice President, the U.S. Secretary of State and members of the U.S. Congress indicate the important nature of the vital role that Jordan is playing in the region on the political and diplomatic levels and on the noble mission he has undertaken personally and directly to explain the real image of Islam.. The King's visit also contributed to strengthening the long-standing Jordan-U.S. friendship and paved the way for increasing cooperative ties between Amman and Washington, perhaps leading to maintaining the U.S. support for Jordan's development programs."

-- "What is wrong with having an Arab who shoulders his responsibilities?"

Columnist Khairallah Khairallah writes on the op-ed page of independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (09/25): "Away from the atmosphere of excitement, empty words and resonant slogans, we find that there are Arabs who have sufficient political vision and realism to benefit from the experiences of the past. These Arabs, very simply, are trying to avoid new bitter experiences that lead to the isolation of Arabs on one hand, and leaving the Palestinians under the mercy of the Israeli colonialist policy on the other. These Arabs know very well that abandoning the Palestinians

and settling for supporting with rhetoric and words . constitute the best service for Ariel Sharon and his project that aims to get rid of Gaza in order to entrench the occupation of part of the West Bank, including Jerusalem. It was true courage what King Abdullah II did. He did not only meeting with Sharon to find out directly what the man wants in the upcoming stage, but he also met with President George Bush Jr., a meeting that led to a request for extending bridges between Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas.. It is significant that the request came from America, because it reflects the great trust in Jordan, its King and its institutions. There were three types of Arabs in New York at the international summit. The first were those preoccupied with their internal problems.. The second were those who believed that wordy support is more than enough to serve the Palestinian people and their cause.. Luckily, there was the third type of Arab who does not suffer from the complex of what is called normalization in the region. This type of Arab is in touch with what is going on in the world and truly wants to serve the Palestinian people, to make sacrifices for them and to contribute to the establishment of stability in the Middle East, instead of leaving it under the mercy of the Israeli occupation. This type of Arab has conducted open contacts and discussion with the Israeli officials in New York [referring to King Abdullah's meetings with Israeli officials].. There is a void that needs to be filled. It is a void that results not only from the war that Palestinian factions, supported by regional forces, are waging against the Palestinian Authority, but also from Israel's keenness to confirm that there is not Palestinian partner to negotiate with.. There is no shame in an Arab official meeting with Sharon or others if that serves the Palestinian people and stability in the region. When King Abdullah heads for his meetings with the Palestinian President and the Israeli Prime Minister, we can say right now that the initial outcome yielded is the confirmation of the presence of a Palestinian partner in the peace process, as well as the confirmation that the Arabs, at least some Arabs, are willing to shoulder their responsibility instead of blaming others. So what is wrong with having an Arab willing to shoulder his responsibility and deal with the status quo realistically?"

-- "The King of courageous initiatives"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (09/25) editorializes: "This is a good time for King Abdullah II to confirm that the barrier of desperation can be broken and that the impasse in the Palestinian territories does not mean turning our backs to the opportunities available to move forward towards diminishing the Israeli occupation and increasing the hope for establishing the state so longed for by the Palestinian people. The announcement about the King's intention to hold talks with the Palestinian President and the Israeli Prime Minister comes after the King's visit to the United States, during which he stressed the necessity of active movement towards ending the Palestinian Israeli struggle as well as helping the Iraqi people build their own future. Moreover, King Abdullah, who has undertaken the biggest campaign ever done by an Arab Muslim leader to change the wrong impression prevalent about Islam, stresses the fact that communicating with others always provides an opportunity for mutual understanding and shared action to resolve crises and achieve security, stability and peace for all parties.. It is normal for these issues to be the topic of discussion between the King and President Bush, who hailed the King's desire to start an initiative between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders. The U.S. administration knows that Jordan's role in regional issues is pivotal as much as it is positive. The King, who put together the Aqaba summit meeting that highlighted the mutual commitments vis--vis the roadmap, is still ready and willing to continue efforts towards placing the two parties on the right track.. The agreement with President Bush with regard to the importance of King Abdullah's initiative is meant to show the Palestinian and Israeli parties that the roadmap . is still the best option for ending the occupation and establishing a viable Palestinian state existing side by side with Israel in an atmosphere of just and lasting peace prevailing in the entire region."

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